

Weather

Today: Variably cloudy, mild.
High 54. Low 40. Wind 6-12 mph.
Wednesday: Mostly cloudy, rain.
High 42. Low 34. Wind 15-25 mph.
Yesterday: Temp. range: 32-55.
Wind chill: 3. Details on Page B2.

The Washing^{ing}

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Lake Quits as CIA Nominee,

By Walter Pincus
Washington Post Staff Writer

Anthony Lake suddenly withdrew as President Clinton's nominee to be CIA director yesterday, saying that continued Republican attacks led him to conclude over the weekend that there was no end in sight for his confirmation process.

In an impassioned, 2½-page letter to the president, Lake said that "Washington has gone haywire" in partisanship and called the process he had gone through "nasty and brutish without being short." The former national security adviser insisted he had sufficient votes for Senate confirmation but said he could no longer tolerate delays that were hurting the CIA and National Security Council staff.

Lake's letter cited three new developments that he said would create "endless delay": a GOP request for broader dissemination to senators of files of Lake's FBI back-

ground investigation; the Republicans' desire to question Lake's NSC staff members about meetings with Democratic campaign contributors; and new allegations regarding a Lebanese American donor who met NSC aides and the president.

In a 20-minute meeting with Clinton in the White House residence yesterday, Lake did not give the president a chance to talk him out of withdrawing, according to sources close to Lake. They said Lake told the president that he was "not going to spend the next few months being a dancing bear in a political circus."

Lake had considered dropping out 10 days ago but was talked into appearing at his confirmation hearings, which began last week before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence after two delays that the White House described as politically motivated. On Sunday, Lake decided he would quit and told a handful of aides yesterday morning before going to the president.

Although Lake was said to believe his withdrawal will make Congress look at what may be wrong in the confirmation system, he recognizes that "the folks who led the attack on him may say they won," a source said.

Lake told the president that he was concerned that his continuing nomination battle was beginning to damage the CIA and would make it difficult for him to work with Republicans in Congress if he was confirmed.

Republicans in December picked Lake as the one presidential nominee in the national security area vulnerable for confirmation. Both Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and Defense Secretary William S. Cohen were easily approved.

Since December the GOP has dragged out the process by postponing the hearings on Lake's nomination. After three days of testimony last week, Lake believed he would finally have a vote in committee after

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Citing 'Nasty' Process

a final appearance this Thursday. But obstacles continued to appear.

Committee Chairman Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.), who has been point man in delaying Lake's progress, said Friday after reviewing Lake's FBI files that they had to be made available to members of the intelligence panel. In addition, Shelby and other GOP members of his panel continued to press for interviews under oath by National Security Council members who worked under Lake and had contact with Democratic fund-raisers.

The final straw may have been the story about a Lebanese American businessman, Roger Tamraz, who contributed \$177,000 to the Democratic National Committee during last year's campaign and had meetings with NSC staff members and Clinton. In his letter to Clinton, Lake acknowledged that the story in yesterday's Wall Street Journal about Tamraz was "likely to lead to

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BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Anthony Lake testifying last week at Senate confirmation hearing. He is said to have told president he would not be "a dancing bear in a political circus."

Lake Withdraws as CIA Nominee,

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further delay as an investigation proceeds."

Lake was so convinced that Republicans were seeking ways to delay a committee vote that he said that "if it had not been this [Tamraz] story, then it would be another," according to the sources.

But the Tamraz story promised to be a major embarrassment at Lake's next appearance before the intelligence panel on Thursday. He would have had to admit for a second time that he was not informed when one of his senior deputies had a direct confrontation with then-Democratic National Committee Chairman Don Fowler over granting a major party donor access to the White House.

Tamraz, a controversial figure wanted by law enforcement authorities in Lebanon on suspicion of embezzlement, was seeking White House endorsement of a grandiose plan to build a pipeline across Armenia and Turkey to transport Caspian Sea oil to western markets.

At last week's hearings, Republicans and

some Democrats questioned Lake's management skills after learning that two of his subordinates did not inform him of their June 1996 briefing by FBI agents on possible Chinese attempts to influence congressional elections. He was repeatedly asked how he thought he could manage the intelligence community with its \$30 billion budget if he could not manage a comparatively small NSC staff.

Lake believed he had come through those hearings and looked forward to a committee vote this week.

In his letter to Clinton, Lake said, "After more than three months, I have finally lost patience, and the endless delays are hurting the CIA and NSC staff in ways I can no longer tolerate." He said the partisanship of the attacks on him were politicizing the CIA. He echoed a charge made by intelligence panel Democrats who accused Shelby and other Republicans with destroying the bipartisan nature of their committee.

Although Lake, according to sources,

hoped his withdrawal would allow Clinton to appoint another nominee for CIA director who would not face the delays caused by his nomination, it was not clear to whom the president could turn.

Clinton might be able to avoid another confirmation battle if he selected someone already holding a confirmed position such as Acting CIA Director George Tenet, who was once staff director for the Senate intelligence committee, or Deputy Attorney General Jamie S. Gorelick, who was considered for the post before Lake was chosen.

Although Lake appeared to enjoy the give and take of the three days of hearings, the weeks of personal attacks while waiting and the prospect that it might take even longer before his nomination reached the Senate floor for a vote took their toll.

He resented particularly, as he wrote in his letter, that the nomination was like "a political football in a game with constantly moving goal posts."

He was convinced he had the votes to win and told the president that he might be "per-

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ceived the loser or scared of a further fight" if he quit.

"But this is not a game," he wrote, "and this process is not primarily about me. It's about the future of the Central Intelligence Agency."

Committee member John Glenn (D-Ohio) said he knew of nothing that would have derailed Lake's confirmation and believed that Lake simply got fed up being hounded by critics who "just wanted to pin a scalp on the wall."

"I guess he got tired of being nibbled to death by ducks," Glenn said.

Glenn discounted the importance of the Tamraz story, saying he did not believe it reflected on Lake. Rather, he said, he believed Lake was driven to withdraw his nomination by the cumulative effect of "unsubstantiated charges and innuendo" by those who wanted to defeat him at all costs.

The Journal reported that a National Security Council staff member, Sheila Heslin, rebuffed the pipeline project sought by Tamraz, a prominent contributor to the Democratic Party nationally and in Virginia. Tam-

raz then turned to Fowler, according to the Journal, and shortly afterward Heslin received, unsolicited, a CIA document about Tamraz.

By the Journal's account Lake had nothing to do with this sequence of events, but the paper said the Tamraz episode raised questions about his control of the NSC staff and the possible politicization of intelligence materials that undermined his quest for confirmation.

Fowler hung up on a reporter who reached him last night at his home in South Carolina.

Tamraz did not return a message left on the answering machine at his New York residence.

Records released during the campaign finance investigation show he has visited the White House at least seven times during Clinton's presidency, including one meeting with Heslin.

Staff writers Helen Dewar and Thomas W. Lippman contributed to this report.